

Proposed Legislative Priorities for 2009

Priority #1: Support the NC Division of Medical Assistance's efforts to increase provider participation through the enhancement of Medicaid reimbursements for dental providers that provide comprehensive dental care to special care populations.

Support Information: In the fall of 2006, the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities Dental Task Force received a report that the State of New Mexico's Medicaid program allowed additional reimbursements to certified providers who treat special care patients. Working with the Council, representatives from Access Dental Care, Carolinas Healthcare System and the UNC School of Dentistry proposed a similar plan to the NC Division of Medical Assistance, Dental Division – one that reimburses qualified dental providers for a behavior management code when treating specific special care patients. This code covers the cost of the additional time and personnel required to provide quality, comprehensive dental care to persons with special needs. There is support from the NC Division of Medical Assistance Dental Division for this effort.

Priority #2: Appoint a taskforce that includes representatives from the UNC and ECU Schools of Dentistry, the North Carolina Dental Society and current special care providers to study special care dental workforce issues.

Support for Priority #2: There is a recognized and severe special care dental manpower shortage in the state. Local practitioners are busy providing care to routine populations, so it is doubtful that these private practitioners will also deliver care to the vulnerable special care populations. Dentists admit that they are not well trained in treating special care patients. These patients are often medically compromised and their mental and physical disabilities frequently result in behavior management problems. A hospital component is essential to successfully treat patients whose behavior prevents care delivery in any other setting.

Past attempts by the North Carolina Dental Society's Special Care Committee to ask dentists to become involved with this population have met with little if any success. This avenue should be investigated again, but other means must be identified if North Carolina is to successfully establish a pipeline of providers (dentists, hygienists and assistants) who will specialize in the treatment of special care patients.

Priority #3: Appropriate \$400,000 for a new or existing nonprofit mobile dental provider to purchase and operate a mobile dental unit to serve special care populations, the frail elderly and developmentally disabled in geographic areas of the State that are not currently served by mobile dental units.

Support for Priority #3: There are areas of North Carolina in which caregivers for special care patients find it extremely difficult to find comprehensive dental services for their loved ones. There are community groups that support the concept of having comprehensive dental services available for this population. These groups are willing to use their grassroots efforts to build a program, but need funds to cover initial capital and operating costs.